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Dear Senator Stallworth:

I am very concerned that the STRIVE program has been eliminated from the Governor's budget. This highly successful program has helped hundreds of Connecticut's neediest residents secure employment and have a chance at the American Dream.

STRIVE first came to Connecticut in 1998, and Career Resources now manages the program in Bridgeport, Hartford and New Haven. It has graduated over three thousand people in that time, with over three hundred last year. STRIVE seeks the "sick and tired, the highly barriered, the disabled, including veterans, and those ineligible for state and federal programs because they have felony records. STRIVE teaches hard skills such as keyboarding and business English and math so students can write their own resumes and perform in a work setting. More important, it teaches the soft skills, a firm hand shake, eye contact and office etiquette.

The STRIVE program provides a phenomenal return on tax payer's investment – income earned plus taxes paid plus state and federal assistance they no longer need, against the cost of the program. Last year 145 participants were placed into employment earning an average of \$17,500 and paying nearly \$2,600 in taxes. With a state investment of \$270,000 this translates into a 140% ROI! The program actually pays for itself.

I understand that this is a very difficult budget year, but I hope that you will consider finding the resources to fund this highly successful program that has a tremendous impact in the communities that it serves.

Respectfully,

Michael Askew
Manager